**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

**40 CFR Parts 232 and 233**

**[FRL-3214-1]**

## Clean Water Act Section 404 Program Definitions and Permit Exemptions; Section 404 State Program Regulations

**AGENCY:** Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

**ACTION:** Final rule.

**SUMMARY:** We are hereby issuing final rules containing 404 program definitions and 404(f)(1) exemptions and the procedures and criteria used in approving, reviewing and withdrawing approval of State 404 programs. Part 232 contains definitions and exemptions related to both the Federal and State-run 404 program and Part 233 deals with State programs only. The revisions in these rules will provide the States more flexibility in program design and administration while still meeting the requirements and objectives of the Clean Water Act (the Act).

**EFFECTIVE DATES:** This final rule is effective on July 6, 1988. In accordance with 40 CFR 23.2, this regulation shall be considered issued for purposes of judicial review at 1:00 p.m., Eastern time on June 20, 1988.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Lori Williams, Office of Wetlands Protection (A-104F), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, DC 20460, (202) 382-5043.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This final rule contains the 404 program definitions and 404(f)(1) permit exemptions in addition to the procedures and criteria used in approving, reviewing and withdrawing approval of 404 State programs. Part 232 basically recodifies the existing 404 program definitions and 404(f)(1) permit exemptions in a new, separate part of eliminate any confusion about their applicability. Part 232 applies to both the Federal and State programs. Part 233 revises the procedures and criteria used in approving, reviewing and withdrawing approval of 404 State programs. These final rules provide the States more flexibility in program design and administration while still meeting the requirements and objectives of the Act.

This rule was proposed on October 2, 1984 at 49 FR 39012. The notice invited public comments for a 60-day period ending December 3, 1984. On December 10, 1984 (49 FR 48064), the comment period was extended to January 2, 1985. Thirty-eight comments were received—15 State agencies, 10 environmental groups, 6 industry groups, 4 Federal agencies, and 3 others.

The comments covered the full range of views, ranging from those which indicated that more streamlining is required to those which indicated that the proposed regulations increased flexibility at the expense of environmental protection.

In addition to the more significant revisions described in the preamble, we have made minor editorial and content changes from the proposal. We have also renumbered the sections in Part 233 to close the large gaps in numbering in the proposal.

It is the agency's intent that 40 CFR Part 124 no longer applies to 404 State programs. We will be publishing technical, conforming regulations in the near future.

The following summarizes the major comments and EPA's response to them.

### Response to Comments and Explanation of Changes

*Part 232—404 Program Definitions, Exempt Activities Not Requiring 404 Permits*

*Section 232.2(b):* In response to comment, we have revised the proposed definition of "application" for clarity.

*Section 232.2 (e) and (f):* The definition of "discharge of dredged material" and "discharge of fill material" were modified for consistency with the Corps regulations (33 CFR 323.2 (d) and (f)).

*Section 232.2(j):* We received comment that our definition of "general permit" is different from the Corps' definition (33 CFR 323.2(n)). The proposed definition was taken from the Act (404(e)(1)) and, therefore, has been retained in the final regulation.

*Section 232.2(i):* Under Section 404 of the Act, the Corps (and States approved by EPA) issue permits for discharges of dredged and fill material into waters of the U.S. Under Section 402, EPA (and States approved by EPA) issue permits for discharges of all other pollutants into waters of the U.S. In January 1986 the Corps and EPA entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to resolve a longstanding difference over the appropriate Clean Water Act program to regulate certain discharges of solid wastes into waters of the U.S. The Corps issued its definition of "fill material" in 1977, which provided that only those solid wastes discharged with the primary purpose of replacing an aquatic area or of changing the bottom elevation of a waterbody are regulated under the Corps' 404 program. These discharges include discharges of pollutants intended to fill a regulated wetland to create fast land for development. The Corps' definition excludes pollutants discharged with the primary purpose to dispose of wastes which, under the Corps' definition, would be regulated under Section 402. Under EPA's definition of "fill material," all such solid waste discharges would be regulated under Section 404, regardless of the primary purpose of the discharger. The difference complicated the regulatory program for some solid wastes discharged into waters of the U.S.

The MOA provides an interim arrangement between the agencies for controlling these discharges. In the longer term EPA and Army agree that consideration given to the control of discharges of solid waste both in waters of the U.S. and upland should take into account the results of studies being implemented under the 1984 Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). The main focus of the interim arrangement is to ensure an effective enforcement program under Section 309 of the Act of controlling discharges of solid and semi-solid wastes into waters of the U.S. for the purpose of dispoal of waste. When warranted, EPA will normally initiate section 309 action to control such unauthorized discharges. If it becomes necessary to determine whether Section 402 or 404 applies to an ongoing or proposed discharge, the determination will be based upon criteria in the agreement, which provide, *inter alia,* for certain homogeneous wastes to be regulated under the Section 402 Program and certain heterogeneous wastes to be regulated under the Section 404 Program, subject to certain criteria. This agreement does not affect the regulatory requirements for materials discharged into waters of the U.S. for the primary purpose of replacing an aquatic area or of changing the bottom elevation of a water body. Discharges listed in the Corps definition of "discharge of fill material" (33 CFR 323.2(1)) remain subject to Section 404 even if they occur in association with discharges of waste meeting the criteria in the agreement for Section 402 discharges.

Unless extended by mutual agreement, the MOA will expire at such time as EPA has accomplished specified steps in its implementation of RCRA. In the meantime, these regulations simply repromulgate EPA's existing definition of fill material.

*Section 232.2 (q) and (r):* Several comments were directed toward the

definitions of "waters of the United States" and wetlands." The commentors suggested that these definitions exceed the original intent of Congress.

The legislative history of the Act, from both 1972 and 1977, emphasizes Congress' intent that the jurisdiction of the Act over waters of the United States reflect the maximum extent permissible under the Commerce Clause of the Constitution. The specific definition of wetlands used in these regulations was originally promulgated in 1977 (prior to the 1977 Amendments to the Act) and has been approved in numerous courts, most recently by the Supreme Court in *U.S.* v. *Riverside Bayview Homes Inc.* (106 S.Ct. 455 (Dec. 4, 1985)). The overall definition of waters of the United States has also been approved by the courts, both in its current articulation and in earlier versions. Therefore, we see no need to change these definitions to narrow their coverage.

Several questions have arisen about this application of this definition to isolated waters which are or could be used by migratory birds and endangered species. As the Agency explained in an opinion by the General Counsel dated September 12, 1985, if evidence reasonably indicates that isolated waters are or would be used by migratory birds or endangered species, they are covered by EPA's regulation. Of course, the clearest evidence would be evidence showing actual use in at least a portion of the waterbody. In adition, if a particular waterbody shares the characteristics of other waterbodies whose use by and value to migratory birds as well established, and those characteristics make it likely that the waterbody in question would also be used by migratory birds, it would also seem to fall clearly within the definition (unless, of course, there is other information that indicates the particular waterbody would not in fact be so used). Endangered species are, almost by definition, rare. Therefore, in the case of endangered species, if there is no evidence of actual use of the waterbody (or similar waters in the area) by the species in question, one could actually assume that the waterbody was not susceptible to use by such species, notwithstanding the particular characteristics of the waterbody. However, in each case a specific determination of jurisdiction would have to be made, and would turn on the particular facts.

For clarity and consistency, we are adding the following language from the preamble to the Corps' regulations published on November 13, 1986 (51 FR 41217). This language clarifies some cases that typically are or are not considered "waters of the United States."

"Waters of the United States" typically include the following waters:

- Which are or would be used as habitat by birds protected by Migratory Bird Treaties; or
- Which are or would be used as habitat by other migratory birds which cross State lines; or
- Which are or would be used as habitat for endangered species; or
- Used to irrigate crops sold in interstate commerce.

For clarification it should be noted that we generally do not consider the following waters to be "waters of the United States." However, EPA reserves the right on a case-by-case basis to determine that a particular waterbody within these categories of waters is a water of the United States. Pursuant to agreements with EPA, the permitting authority also has the right to determine on a case-by-case basis if any of these waters are "waters of the United States."

Non-tidal drainage and irrigation ditches excavated on dry land.

- Artificially irrigated areas which would revert to upland if the irrigation ceased.
- Artificial lakes or ponds created by excavating and/or diking dry land to collect and retain water and which are used exclusively for such purposes as stock watering, irrigation, settling basins, or rice growing.
- Artificial reflecting or swimming pools or other small ornamental bodies of water created by excavating and/or diking dry land to retain water for primarily aesthetic reasons.
- Waterfilled depressions created in dry land incidental to construction activity and pits excavated in dry land for the purpose of obtaining fill, sand, or gravel unless and until the construction or excavation operation is abandoned and the resulting body of water meets the definition of waters of the United States.

*Section 232.3:* The 1977 Clean Water Act provided for specific exemptions (404(f)(1)) from permitting requirements. EPA's 1980 Consolidated Permit Regulations promulgated regulations spelling out the scope of the exempted activities. The October 2, 1984, publication proposed several substantive revisions to the 404(f)(1) exemptions, as well as organizational changes. This rulemaking finalizes the organizational changes, but finalizes only one of the proposed substantive revisions. That revision substitutes "one year from discovery" for the previous "one year from formation" in § 232.2(d)(3)(i)(D), which exempts as minor drainage certain discharge of dredged or fill material incidental to the emergency removal of sandbars, gravel bars, or other similar blockages. This rule also includes the revised irrigation ditch provision which was the subject of a separate rulemaking (40 CFR 233.35(a)(3), December 20, 1984). Additionally, we have made the note following § 232.3(b) more explicit to clarify that a conversion of wetlands to non-wetlands is (and has been) considered a "change in use." Apart from these changes, it appears, based on the comments received, that the regulated sector is familiar with the existing language and that no additional clarification or improvement is now needed.

One commenter suggested that the Best Management Practices (BMPs) for the exemption from permitting for construction or maintenance of farm roads, forest roads or temporary roads for moving mining equipment are complex and difficult to administer and should be left to negotiation between the State and EPA for inclusion in the Memorandum of Agreement (§ 233.13). These BMPs are the same BMPs that are required for exemption from Federal permitting requirements. These BMPs were promulgated in 1980 and have not been the subject of significant comment or complaint since then. A discharger under an approved State program should meet the same requirements as under the Federal program.

*Part 233—State Section 404 Program Assumption Regulations*

We received several comments expressing concern that the proposed regulations would weaken Federal responsibilities, such as those in the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Endangered Species Act, and National Environmental Policy Act. When a State assumes the 404 permitting responsibility, these statutes usually no longer apply, since these statutes only apply to Federal actions. When a State assumes the program, the permit decision is a State action, not a Federal action. However, a Federal oversight role is clearly established by section 404(j) of the Act. Therefore, the altered Federal role after program approval is a function of the statutory scheme, not these regulations.

*Section 233.1:* Several comments were received on partial State programs, ranging from the view that partial programs should not be allowed to the

view that it is desirable to approve partial programs. The commentors identified partial programs in terms of geographic extent or scope of activities regulated. EPA interprets the Act as requiring State programs to have full geographic and activities jurisdiction (subject to the limitation in section 404(g)). While specific authorization for partial programs under section 402 was enacted in the Water Quality Act of 1987, no similar provision was added for section 404. Accordingly, partial 404 programs are not approvable. Because of the special status of Indians, a lack of State authority to regulate activities on Indian lands will not cause the State's program to be considered a partial program.

We encourage States to begin working with the Federal land-owning agencies (i.e., Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service to name a few) early in the program development stage. This should eliminate or reduce any confusion that may develop, since subsequent to program approval, the State will assume 404 permitting responsibility in these lands.

In response to comments, we have clarified that States may have a program that is more stringent or extensive than what is required for an approvable program. Under State law, and not as part of its approved program, States may also regulate discharges into those waters over which the Corps retains jurisdiction. Those parts of the State's program that go beyond the scope of Federal requirements for an approvable program are not subject to Federal oversight or federally enforceable. Of course, while States may impose more stringent requirements they may not compensate for making one requirement more lenient than required under these regulations by making another requirement more stringent than required.

*Section 233.3:* One commentor requested that we limit confidentiality only to that information that does not relate to adverse effects on the aquatic environment. As these regulations conform to EPA's general regulations on confidentiality of information (40 CFR Part 2), we did not make the requested change.

*Section 233.4:* In the preamble to the proposed rulemaking, we specifically sought comment on the conflict of interest section. Several comments were received on this topic, the vast majority of which supported the need for a conflict of interest provision. However, several commentors did suggest that some flexibility should be added into this section.

The current language is derived from the requirements for an approvable NPDES program. However, State 404 programs should not be held to the same conflict of interest standards as State NPDES programs because of factual differences between the two programs. NPDES discharges are usually long term discharges, often from certain specific types of industrial or municipal dischargers. Discharges authorized by section 404 typically tend to be one time, of shorter duration, and by a wider range of dischargers than NPDES, ranging from private citizens to large corporations, from small fills for boat docks or erosion prevention to major development projects. Therefore, an absolute ban on anyone with a financial interest in a permit from serving on a board that approves permits is likely to be more difficult to comply with under the 404 program than under the NPDES program because under the NPDES criteria, so many people would be considered to be financially interested in 404 permits that the pool of potential 404 board members would be unreasonably small. In addition, because of the nature and size of the discharge, 404 dischargers will often have less at stake financially than 402 dischargers.

Therefore, we have simplified the conflict of interest section from what was proposed. The final rule does not prohibit a person with an interest in a 404 permit decision from generally participating on a board which makes decisions on permit issuance or denial. However, anyone with a direct personal or pecuniary interest in a particular permit decision *must* make such interest known and must *not* participate in that permit decision. This new language allows more latitude in who may serve on a board, but still provides that there not be a conflict of interest or appearance of conflict of interest in any particular permit decision. This language effectuates the basic intent of the NPDES criteria, by ensuring that board members are disinterested decisionmakers.

*Section 233.10:* In response to comment, we have clarified our original intent that copies of State statutes and regulations submitted as part of a State's submission include statutes and regulations concerning the State's applicable administrative procedures.

*Section 233.11:* Several comments addressed the need for additional information in the program description. These commentors were concerned that there may be insufficient information available to determine a program's adequacy. These regulations reflect EPA's view that a complete program description is essential for determining the adequacy of a State's program. A State's program must be at least as stringent and extensive as the Federal program. In response to these comments, we have specified certain information that must be included in the scope and structure of the State's program. The description of the scope and structure of the State's program must include a detailed description of the extent of the State's jurisdiction, scope of the activities regulated as well as the scope of permit exemptions (if any), anticipated coordination, and the environmental permit review criteria.

Section 233.11(h) clarifies the requirements for a description of the State's jurisdiction. As part of the program description, the State must describe separately the waters it will assume after program approval and the waters retained by the Corps. This should make it easier for the public to understand the split jurisdiction between the State and the Corps.

We do not concur with the comment that, in addition to a description of funding and manpower available for program administration, the program description should include formal assurance from the Governor that the level of funding is sufficient to provide for an effective program. However, we have reinstated the existing requirement that the State provide an estimate of the anticipated workload. This should provide the information needed to determine if the State has sufficient manpower to adequately administer a good program. If there is insufficient funding or manpower for an adequate program, this will become evident either in review of the program submission or in the annual review of an approved program.

*Section 233.13:* In response to comment, we have specified that, if more than one State agency has responsibility for program administration, all the involved State agencies must be parties to the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the State and EPA's Regional Administrator. This requirement is in the existing regulations, but had been eliminated in the proposal. Restoring this requirement ensures that all State agencies responsible for program implementation are fully aware of their responsibilities.

One commenter suggested we use the MOA to establish procedures to withdraw a permit from State processing prior to any State action on the application. We do not agree with this suggestion. Except for one situation provided for in Section 404(j), only the

State may issue a permit for discharges in State regulated waters.

We do not agree with the comment that the proposal fails to ensure adequate coordination of EPA and State enforcement activities, as it requires the MOA to address State and EPA roles and coordination on compliance monitoring and enforcement activities. The purpose of formalizing this aspect of the State's program in an MOA is to assure adequate coordination on compliance monitoring and enforcement activities. As part of the State's program submission, this MOA is subject to public comment. If there is any question on the adequacy of a particular program, it should become apparent during Federal agency and public review.

Many commentors expressed concern about the provision for waiver of Federal review. Many were concerned that the waiver provision would be abused and that environmental protection of the resources would suffer. Several commentors were concerned that inappropriate categories would be waived. We feel that use of this waiver provision will reduce workload and paperwork and focus Federal resources where they are most needed and appropriate. Specific waivers will be available for public review and comment prior to program approval.

This final regulation eliminates a separate section on sharing of information (former 40 CFR 233.29), since the MOA with the Regional Administrator is already required to address State submittal of information to EPA and EPA access to State records, reports and files relevant to the program. We feel this adequately serves the purpose of 40 CFR 233.29.

*Section 233.14:* In response to comments, we have, as in the previous section, now specified that all State agencies responsible for program administration must be parties to the Memorandum of Agreement between the State and the Secretary.

EPA has also added a note encouraging States to use this MOA to establish procedures for joint processing of Federal and State permits. Several comments requested that joint processing be made mandatory. While we agree that joint permit processing may be very beneficial to the regulated public, we cannot make this a condition to an approvable program. However, we will continue to strongly encourage States to look into the possibility of joint processing.

In response to comment, we have retained the existing requirement that, if States plan to assume existing Corps general permits, this MOA must include procedures for transferring the support files for these general permits from the Corps to the State. This will facilitate State oversight of such general permits.

One commentor was concerned that the regulations eliminated a provision for procedures to ensure the State did not approve permits on the basis of incomplete applications transferred by the Corps. This provision was deleted as unnecessary. Once a State assumes the program, it is responsible for fulfilling all permitting requirements, including public notice. The regulation requires that sufficient information be available to meet the information requirements for public notice and for assessing the impacts of the discharge. Therefore, the State must either deny incomplete applications or take steps to get the complete information.

*Section 233.15:* The Act establishes a 120-day time clock for EPA decision on a State's request for program approval. The final regulation clarifies that this statutorily mandated time period starts on EPA's receipt of a complete program submission. If the State significantly changes its submission during the review period, the time clocks starts over upon EPA's receipt of the revised submission. The review period may be extended upon agreement of the State and EPA.

We cannot agree to the suggestion that the regulation lengthen the public comment period and notice of public hearing for decision on a State program. The Act is very specific on the timeframe for this decision. If a decision is not made within the 120 days timeframe, the State's program is automatically approved. EPA cannot make a decision within the mandated 120 days of receipt if these time frames are extended. Of course, as noted earlier, a State may agree to extend the time period for program approval; in that event, additional time could be provided for public participation within that State.

EPA will make its decision to approve or disapprove the State's program within the statutorily mandated timeframe. However, if approved, the State's program will not be effective until the notice of approval is published in the **Federal Register.**

Many comments were received on the delegation of authority to the Regional Administrator to approve/disapprove State programs. Most commentors were concerned about national consistency among the States' programs. The Delegation Manual, which formalizes this delegation of authority, requires that the Regional Administrator approving a State program must obtain the concurrence of two EPA headquarters offices—Office of Water and Office of General Counsel. This should ensure the desired national consistency.

EPA has added language to make it explicit that programs shall be approved or disapproved based on whether the State's program fulfills the requirements of this regulation and the Act.

This rule also clarifies that EPA will use existing State, Corps, FWS and NMFS mailing lists as the basis for mailing notices about the State's request for program approval.

A summary of significant comments received and response to these comments will be prepared by the Regional Administrator prior to decision on a State's program. Since there are already specific requirements for public notice and public hearing, there is no need for (and we have deleted the requirement for) the responsiveness summary itself to describe the public participation activities or matters presented to the public.

*Section 233.16:* This rule clarifies that it is the State's obligation to keep the Regional Administrator informed of any proposed or actual changes to the State's approved program.

We rejected the suggestion that if a State must amend or enact new legislation to comply with any modification in Federal regulation, the change must be promulgated within one year of the modification. A two year time period was chosen because many State legislatures do not meet every year. A one-year deadline for these States would be impossible to meet.

We also do not agree with the suggestion that minor revisions to an approved State program should undergo as much review and/or coordination as substantial program revisions. As the name (minor revision) implies, these program changes will not have a significant impact on the program or the environment. Of course, if there is question in EPA's mind about whether a proposed revision is minor or substantial, the revision shall be considered substantial and undergo full review specified for an original application.

*Section 233.21:* Several commentors questioned the legality of State issued general permits. Sections 404 (g), (h) and (j) of the Act authorize this type of State permit.

Many commenters were received on general permits. States have the option of assuming administration of Corps' existing general permits. If they choose to exercise this option, the State is responsible for ensuring discharges comply with any existing permit conditions and any reporting, monitoring

or predischarge requirements. The Corps shall provide the State copies of the support files for any general permits assumed by the State.

One commentor questioned the advisability of EPA approving transfer of some existing Corps general permits to a State. EPA cannot ignore Sections 404 (g)(1) and (h)(5) which provide for a State to assume existing general permits. If a State with an approved State program proposes renewal of any permits that have not worked well, EPA will comment/object to these proposed permits, as appropriate.

Several commentors expressed satisfaction with the Corps' existing general permits. These commentors expressed concern about the States not assuming such existing general permits and about their opportunity for participation in such a decision. It is the State's prerogative not to assume any of the existing general permits. However, if, at the time of initial program assumption, the State does not intend to assume existing Corps general permits, this will be noted within the program submission and will be subject to public comment and public hearing as part of the approval process. Failure to assume existing Corps general permits does not constitute a partial program, since the State will process individual permit applications for those discharges previously authorized by general permit. Any Corps general permit not assumed by the State will remain in effect, for purposes of the Clean Water Act, until its normal expiration date, unless revoked or modified sooner by the Corps under its procedures. If subsequent to program approval the State decides to revoke or modify a general permit it has assumed, the normal revocation procedures will apply.

Many comments were received on predischarge notification requirements for general permits. Some commenters agreed that notification should be determined on a permit-by-permit basis; others felt that such notification should be required on all general permits. This rule adopts the proposal that notification requirements be established on a permit-by-permit basis. For instance, prenotification or reporting may be required in areas where there is a likelihood for individual or cumulative adverse effect on the environment because of discharges conducted under a general permit. All draft general permits will be reviewed by EPA and the other Federal review agencies as well as the general public. If during the review of a particular draft general permit, EPA determines that notification provisions are appropriate to ensure compliance with the 404(b)(1) Guidelines, we will so state in the Federal comments to the State. This ensures that notification requirements will be included where in fact appropriate.

The Department of the Interior requested that we require a 30-day prenotification requirement on any discharge pursuant to a general permit that may impact units of the National Park System, National Wildlife Refuge System, National Fish Hatchery, Reclamation project lands, Indian Reservation and Trust lands, and public lands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management. We do not feel at this time that there is a basis for automatically requiring such prenotification. If there is a need for prenotification for a particular permit, it may be specified through the Federal comment on the draft permits and will therefore be included in the issued general permit, in accordance with § 233.50.

Several commentors requested that we retain limits on any single operation conducted under a general permit. We agree that this is appropriate. Subsection 233.21(c) (1) and (2) require each general permit to have limits on the size and location and type of fill for any single operation, sufficient to ensure minimal adverse environmental effects when performed separately and minimal cumulative adverse effects, as required by Section 404(e).

One commentor was concerned that we had deleted all the standard permit conditions (§ 233.23) for general permits. Section 233.21(c) (1) and (2) recapture the main items of § 233.23(c)(1) such as specific description of activities authorized including limitations for any single operation and precise description of geographic area to which the general permit applies including any limitations where operations may be conducted. The only part of § 233.23 (Permit conditions) that does not apply for general permits is § 233.23(c)(1), which is not applicable because it refers to items that are pertinent only to individual permits (e.g. name and address of permittee).

Several commentors suggested that the Director should show cause for invoking discretionary authority to require an individual permit. This regulation specifies that discretionary authority may be based on concerns for the aquatic environment including compliance with these regulations and the 404(b)(1) Guidelines. Section 510 of the Act preserves the Director's right to impose more stringent requirements, i.e., to invoke discretionary authority for other reasons under State law. Once the Director notifies a discharger that he will exercise discretionary authority to require an individual permit, the activity is no longer authorized under the general permit. If the activity continues after notification, the discharger is subject to enforcement action.

*Section 233.22:* In response to comments requesting more specific permit conditions, we have clarified that emergency permits, to the extent possible, should incorporate all applicable permit conditions (§ 233.23), including restoration of the site. We have also retained the provision that emergency permits shall be limited to duration of time needed to complete the authorized emergency action.

We do not agree with the comment that the Regional Administrator must show cause to terminate an emergency permit. The Regional Administrator never terminates permits. The Director may terminate an emergency permit if he determines such an action is necessary to protect human health or the environment.

*Section 233.23:* Each permit shall have conditions which assure compliance with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. If any of these requirements change, the permit conditions must be modified as needed to assure compliance with the revised requirements.

In response to comments, we have added a requirement that the permit contain conditions which assure that the discharge will be conducted in a manner which minimizes adverse impacts on the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the waters of the United States. This is a reiteration of the requirements in the 404(b)(1) Guidelines (§ 230.10(a)). Restoration and mitigation may be considered as mechanisms for reducing adverse impacts in appropriate circumstances.

One commentor expressed concern about the proposed deletion of the permit condition referring to BMP's approved by a Statewide 208(b)(4) agency. If a State has an approved 208 program, these requirements would be covered by § 233.23(a), which requires the Director to establish conditions which assure compliance with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, so there is no need for a separate reference to the BMP's.

In response to comment, we have retained the requirement for a permit condition explaining that a permit violation is a violation of the Act as well as of State statutes or regulations, as this reminder may enhance compliance.

We also have expanded § 233.23(c)(6) to require the permittee to provide the Director information to determine whether cause exists for permit revocation or termination as well as modification.

We concur with the comment that the Director or his authorized representative should have proper identification before they can enter the premises or inspect any records. We believe this is reasonable and have added this to the final regulation.

One commentor requested that the regulation require more specific identification of the disposal site. We feel that between the existing requirements for permit application, public notice and permit conditions, the disposal site will be adequately identified. However, as a safeguard, we have added that the description of the project on the issued permit must include a description of the purpose of the discharge.

*Section 233.24 (Effect of a permit).* This section has been deleted as unnecessary. The statements in this section were simply facts which do not need to be included in regulations to be in effect.

*Section 233.30:* Many comments were received on the State application form. A number expressed concern that there would not be enough information available to evaluate the potential impacts of the discharge activity. We have accordingly revised this section to generally reflect the same application information requirements contained in the Corps' current regulations (33 CFR Part 325). Under this approach, State assumption of the program should not result in any change in either the kind of information available for review or the burden upon the applicant to supply the information. In addition, a requirement for certification that all information contained in the application is true and accurate has been added to § 233.30(b)(4).

Several commentors requested that we include the publicity and pre-application consultation requirements in the regulations. As noted in the preamble to the proposed rule, we agree that publicity and preapplication consultation are beneficial; however, they are not required for an approvable program. We will continue to encourage States to include them in their programs.

*Section 233.31:* In response to comment, this section has been simplified from proposed § 233.61; it now simply requires coordination with other States whose waters may be impacted by the discharge and coordination with Federal and Federal-State water related planning and review processes, without attempting to list such processes. These planning and review processes may include, but are not limited to, coastal zone management plans, 208 areawide plans, Continuing Planning Process (§ 303(e)), and advanced identification (40 CFR 230.80). The coordination procedures will likely vary from State to State. The State's anticipated coordination shall be included in the program description. EPA will carefully scrutinize the anticipated coordination to assure it is adequate.

Comments were received suggesting that we require States to incorporate into their programs information developed by FWS' National Wetlands Inventory (NWI). While we agree that this information would be very useful in administering a State's program and encourage States to take advantage of it, it should not be mandatory for States to incorporate this information in their programs. The NWI was not developed for regulatory purposes. Additionally, the FWS did not use EPA's definition of wetlands in the NWI; therefore, the "NWI wetlands" and the "404 wetlands" may not always coincide.

Several commentors were concerned that the lack of specificity of coordination requirements would weaken State programs. While these regulations do not list specific entities (agencies) that must be coordinated with, we will carefully evaluate the coordination aspects of each State's program prior to decision on approval/disapproval. While we anticipate that the State's permitting agency will coordinate with State fish and game agencies, this is not required by the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA). Once a State assumes the 404 permitting responsibility, that Act no longer applies in the permitting process since permitting becomes a State (not Federal) action. The FWCA will still require coordination with FWS whenever a State-issued permit is issued to a Federal agency or facility. However, it must also be remembered that States must assure compliance with the 404(b)(1) Guidelines which provide for protection of fish and wildlife resources. EPA is responsible for soliciting comments from the Corps, FWS, and NMFS, and commenting to the States.

*Section 233.32:* Many comments were received on proposed § 233.62 (public notice), some in support of and others opposed to shortening the public comment period. The final rule provides for a public comment period at least comparable to that under the Federal program. The existing Corps' regulations (33 CFR Part 325.3) specify a public notice period of "A reasonable period of time, normally thirty days but not less than fifteen days from date of mailing." Today's rules specify "* * * a reasonable period of time, normally 30 days," and allows approving a program that allows less than a 30 day public comment period if the Regional Administrator determines that "sufficient public notice is provided for." The Regional Administrator must carefully consider all aspects of a State's program in regard to public involvement, including how extensive the State's mailing list is, whether notice is published in area newspapers, what the actual length of the comment period is, whether the shorter time period is for all projects or just certain categories of discharge. We anticipate that comment periods would not be shorter than 20 days, and we will carefully scrutinize any that are less than 30 days.

Several comments on the content of the public notices were also received. These comments objected to the lack of specificity of the information required to be included in the public notice. In response to these comments, the information requirements for public notice have been changed. These regulations incorporate much of the language in the Corps' existing regulations (33 CFR 325.3.) Therefore, there should be no net change in the information available to evaluate a proposed discharge from the existing Federal program to an approved State program.

We have modified the requirement on who must automatically be mailed notice of a permit application. While the notification may vary depending on the type and location of the project, certain notifications, such as the local governmental agency, should be routine. Other notifications that may be useful include historic preservation and coastal zone management offices.

In response to comments, we have also clarified that anyone may request to be put on a mailing list to receive copies of public notices.

One commentor suggested that we make it clear that information obtained in response to the public notice will be taken into consideration as part of the environmental assessment to determine if an environmental impact statement (EIS) should be prepared. We have not included this language since, once a State assumes the permitting responsibility, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) no longer applies. NEPA applies to Federal actions. When a State assumes the program, the permit decision is a State action, not a Federal action. While many States have a State law equivalent to

NEPA, it is not the function of these regulations to address EIS requirements under such State laws.

*Section 233.33:* This provision has been rewritten to clarify how the transcript of public hearings will be made available to the public.

*Section 233.34:* Several commentors expressed concern that requiring the State to prepare a written determination for each permit is excessive paperwork. We do not concur with this view; we feel that a written determination is needed for each permit decision to ensure proper evaluation and to facilitate subsequent review. Therefore, these regulations contain the requirement that the Director must prepare a written determination for each permit application outlining the decision and the rationale for the decision. Of course, in accordance with § 230.6 of the Guidelines, the level of detail may be tailored to the circumstances.

Any State environmental review criteria must be at least equivalent to the 404(b)(1) Guidelines for an approvable program. The 404(b)(1) Guidelines were the subject of an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) (47 FR 36798) published August 23, 1982, to solicit comments and examples of alleged problems with these Guidelines. At this time, EPA has not found sufficient basis for revising the Guidelines. Therefore, States must assure compliance with the current Guidelines, as required in section 404(h)(1)(A)(i).

We do not concur with the suggestion that we establish specific deadlines for State decision on an application. The only deadlines in this regulation are those which relate to the statutorily mandated timeframes for Federal review of an application.

*Section 233.35:* The final regulation simply requires signature by both the applicant and the Director, and does not specify the sequence in which they sign. However, EPA anticipates that, if the project is controversial or if the permit conditions are restrictive, the Director may wish to require the applicant to sign the permit to indicate acceptance of its terms prior to the Director's signature.

*Section 233.36:* These regulations simplify the procedures for modification, suspension and revocation of permits. State procedures to handle these situations shall be approved if there is opportunity for public comment, coordination with the Federal review agencies, and opportunity for public hearing. Language has been added (§ 233.36(b)) specifying that permit modification must be in compliance with § 233.20 (Prohibitions).

The 402 State program regulations handle modifications differently than these 404 State Program Regulations. 40 CFR 122.62 provides an exclusive list of grounds which justify the modification of a 402 State permit. Section 233.36 does not. This difference between the two programs is appropriate for the following reasons. First, the 402 program has a long history of litigation concerning reopener and the five year maximum permit term; the 404 program does not. Second, the 402 program generally regulates continuous discharges; consequently, there is great concern with balancing the permittee's need for certainty and continuity against the program's need to impose more stringent standards. The 404 program, however, tends to regulate short-term discharges, and thus the permittee's need for continuity is much less than it is in the 402 program. Consequently, the 404 programs may facilitate permit modification by States where the 402 program can not.

One commenter expressed concern about use of abbreviated review procedures for modification of permits for minor modification of project plans that do not "significantly" change the character, scope and/or purpose of the project or result in significant change in environmental impact. The commenter was concerned that the use of the word "significant" was too vague and allowed a procedural loophole to avoid public and agency review. The key word in this sentence is "*minor*" modification. Things that will be evaluated in making the decision on whether the project modification is minor are whether there is any change in project purpose, or any change that increases the amount of dredged or fill material, or any change that enlarges the scope of the project. We anticipate that, if there is any question about the need for public and agency review of a project modification, the State will initiate full review procedures.

*Section 233.37:* In the preamble to the proposed regulation (49 FR 39015) we noted that the requirements concerning who must sign may not necessarily be appropriate for the 404 program. The language in the proposal was the result of a settlement agreement (*NRDC* v. *EPA*, and consolidated cases [No. 80-1607 (D.C. Circuit)]). All the comments received on this subject agreed that the proposed signature requirements are appropriate for NPDES discharges, but are too inflexible and are not really appropriate for 404 discharges, since most 404 discharges are a one time discharge and on a relatively small scale. We concur with these comments. Therefore, this final regulation incorporates the signatory requirements contained in the Corps' current regulations (33 CFR 325.1). Thus, there will be no change from the existing Section 404 requirements when a State assumes the program.

The certification that all statements contained in the application or other documents are true and accurate and that there are penalties for submitting false information has been removed from this section to § 233.30 (Application for a permit). Section 233.41(a)(3)(iii) also addresses this certification in that it provides for authority to seek criminal fines against any person who knowingly makes false statements in any application, record, report, plan or other document filed or required to be maintained under the Act, these regulations or the approved State program.

*Section 233.38:* One commentor requested that if a State permit application has been submitted in a timely manner, an existing Federal permit should be continued beyond its expiration date until a State permit is issued. The provision in the Administrative Procedures Act for continuing Federal permits does not apply in this setting. Therefore, such continuation may be accomplished only through State law. These regulations allow but do not require the State to have such authority. We cannot mandate that this be a requirement for an approvable program.

*Section 233.40:* The compliance evaluation provision has been rewritten from the existing regulation to simplify it and to provide additional flexibility. We continue to believe that compliance evaluation is an important component of an effective Section 404 program. Therefore, the previous provisions (40 CFR 233.27 (1984)) should be considered as guidance in interpreting the new streamlined language.

We do not agree with the comment that State agency authority to "* * * enter any site or premises subject to regulation" is excessive or may violate civil rights. This provision does not override applicable warrant requirements or other safeguards. Of course, if State requirements so constrain the State's right of entry that the State lacks meaningful authority to inspect, the program would not be approvable. (We are not presently aware of any States where there would be this problem, however.)

*Section 233.41:* Many comments were received on the proposed alternative requirements for authority to assess civil and criminal fines of a specific amount. The comments ranged from approval of

the alternative concept to concern about weakening State enforcement capability. This regulation promulgates the proposed subsection allowing approval of a State program without the specific monetary penalty authority if it has a demonstrably effective alternative enforcement mechanism.

We are interested in ensuring that State programs have strong enforcement capability, since it is not desirable for EPA to constantly overfile in State enforcement actions. Because the Act does not specify that a State must have penalties equal to the Federal penalties or at any other particular level for an approvable program, EPA has substantial discretion in deciding what is sufficient State enforcement authority. These regulations establish monetary penalties for which the State must have the authority to assess; they need not be assessed by the State for every violation. These amounts are approximately half those EPA is authorized to assess.

If a State cannot fulfill these monetary penalty requirements, it can still have an approved program if EPA is satisfied that it has "an alternate, demonstrably effective method of ensuring compliance." However, even under the alternative enforcement program provision, States must still have the authority to assess both civil and criminal penalties, although the amounts may not equal those required by § 233.41(a)(i)–(iii).

Before approving any alternate enforcement mechanism, the Regional Administrator (RA) will carefully evaluate the State's proposed alternative enforcement mechanism to ascertain the effectiveness of the proposed alternative. The State's program must have a clear history of demonstrated effective deterrence, while also having direct punitive value. Programs will have to be in effect for at least one year prior to formal application for program approval in order to have a sufficient track record for evaluating effectiveness.

An effective, strong restoration program is the type of enforcement program that would be given serious consideration as an alternative under this provision. Being of a solid nature, 404 discharges tend to stay where originally placed, making restoration of illegally filled areas more feasible for 404 discharges as compared to 402 discharges. Most 404 discharges are a one time discharge, of relatively short duration, and on a relatively small scale. This lends more credence to restoration working as an alternative enforcement mechanism which can serve to protect the environment, deter future violations, and penalize the violator.

A key aspect that the RA must consider in determining effectiveness is whether the alternative program has an equivalent deterrence effect as would assessment of monetary penalties. The alternative approach must be strong enough to cause a violator to cease any and all illegal activities. It must also deter others from violating the State's permit program. How effective the alternative mechanism will be in preventing and restoring any environmental damage will also be considered by the RA in making a decision on approval/denial of a State's alternative enforcement program.

The enforcement authority which a State must have in order for a Section 404 program to be approved is essentially the same enforcement authority it must have to administer an NPDES program under the Act. If a State lacks authority to recover penalties of the levels required under § 233.41(a)(3)(i)–(iii), EPA will review a State's authority to assess penalties in light of the State's ability to provide other incentives to compliance and deterrence to noncompliance. EPA intends that penalties for violations of Section 404 programs will provide general and specific deterrence. Penalties assessed in State administered programs should persuade the violator to take precautions against falling into noncompliance again, deter violations by others, and restore economic equity to regulated parties who have complied with Section 404 requirements. Penalties assessed in a State program should, at a minimum, recapture the economic benefit that a violator has wrongfully obtained. In support of its application for program approval, a State may provide information regarding its authority to obtain money judgments from Section 404 violators under equitable theories such as restitution and unjust enrichment.

Any proposed alternative enforcement mechanism will be available for public comment as part of the State's program submission. We are concerned about national consistency in administration and effectiveness of State programs. Therefore, we must stress that approval of an alternate enforcement mechanism will not be undertaken lightly. States should continue to try to meet the existing monetary penalty requirements.

In these regulations we have added a reporting requirement for States using the alternative enforcement authority. Under final § 233.41(d) the State must keep the Regional Administrator informed of all enforcement actions carried out under the alternative provision. The manner of reporting will be established as part of the State's submission in the Memorandum of Agreement with the Regional Administrator. This reporting requirement will enable EPA to closely monitor the effectiveness of the State's enforcement program and to determine any need for EPA overfiling in State enforcement cases and/or action under Section 309.

In response to comment, we have retained the requirement that the burden of proof for State enforcement cases shall be no greater than the burden of proof required of EPA.

One commentor suggested that any intervention in a State enforcement action must include some showing of justification. This regulation adopts the proposal which allows intervention "* * *" by any citizen having an interest which is or may be adversely affected." We feel this adequately answers the suggestion.

One commentor requested that EPA prescribe procedures for any affected person to initiate legal action in State or Federal court against the Director, the permittee, or anyone operating in noncompliance with a State program. This would be comparable to the citizen suit provision in Section 505 of the Act. While such a provision might strengthen a State program, there is no such statutory requirement for an approvable program. However, we do anticipate that many States will have some form of citizen suit provisions.

**Subpart F—Oversight Policy**

Many Federal environmental programs were designed by Congress to be administered at the State level wherever possible. EPA's policy has been to transfer the administration of national programs to State governments to the fullest extent possible, consistent with statutory intent and good management practice. The clear intent of this design is to use the strengths of Federal and State governments in a partnership to protect public health and the nation's air, water, and land. State governments are expected to assume primary responsibility, while EPA is to provide consistent environmental leadership at the national level, develop general program frameworks, establish standards as required by the legislation, assist States in preparing to assume responsibility for program operation, provide technical support to States in maintaining high quality programs, and ensure national compliance with environmental quality standards.

The relationship between EPA and the States under assumption of the Section 404 Program is intended to be a partnership. Both EPA and the States have continuing roles and responsibilities under assumed State 404 programs. EPA remains responsible to the President, the Congress and the public for progress toward meeting national environmental goals and for ensuring that the Clean Water Act is adequately enforced. Thus, EPA's policy to transfer management responsibilities for environmental programs to State governments carriers with it a corresponding EPA responsibility to assure the objectives of the Federal law are achieved.

Evaluation of approved State 404 programs will generally focus on overall program performance and identifying patterns of problems. However, there will be some cases where EPA (and other Federal agency) participation in an individual State permit decision will be appropriate. Section 404(j) specifically provides for Federal comment on individual permit applications.

However, based on our general policy and our specific experience with Michigan's Section 404 program, the provision for waiver of Federal review (§ 404(k)) will be exercised to focus permit-specific oversight primarily on proposed discharges with potentially serious adverse environmental impacts. Review of Michigan's assumed program clearly illustrates that Federal review was waived in the vast majority of cases. In 1985, approximately 1% of the permit applications received Federal review; in 1986, approximately 1.5%.

We expect to issue guidance on Federal oversight of approved State programs under these regulations. This will include guidance on identifying and describing categories of activities eligible and appropriate for waiver of Federal review, emphasizing reasonable waiver initially, followed by increasing waiver over time based on experience with the State 404 Program. Thus, as experience demonstrates that a State is effectively administering its approved program, so as to comply with all national requirements, it is expected that additional waivers will be developed, replacing more individual permit review with periodic programmatic review. This periodic review will usually be conducted on an annual basis, but may be more frequent, as necessary or appropriate. EPA intends that other Federal agencies with responsibility under Section 404 will have an opportunity to participate in State program review activities and in the determination of what changes to such review would be appropriate.

*Section 233.50:* Several commentors expressed concern that too much time is allowed for Federal review of State permit applications. The final regulations retain the proposed time frames because they are based on Section 404(j) of the Act. However, the regulations do allow for the times to be shortened by mutual agreement of the Federal agencies and the State.

Several commentors questioned why EPA receives the public notice from the State and distributes the notice to the Federal agencies. The Act establishes EPA as the Federal focus of contact with the State. However, if the State, with the goal of streamlining, wants to provide copies of the public notice directly to all the Federal agencies, this can be accommodated within the Memorandum of Agreement with the Regional Administrator (§ 233.13). In either case, the comments from the Federal review agencies will be forwarded to EPA to consolidate the Federal comment to the State.

In addition to the public notice and draft general permit, the Regional Administrator shall forward to the Corps, FWS, and NMFS any other information pertinent to making an informed comment that the States makes available to him.

This regulation eliminates the requirement that States prepare draft individual permits. Draft general permits must be prepared (§ 404(j) refers to a copy of each proposed general permit) but there is no comparable statutory requirement for draft individual permits. Moreover, draft permits are not prepared as part of the current Federal program. Public review of individual permit applications is currently based on the public notice; public review subsequent to State assumption will also be based on public notice. Therefore, there will be no substantial change from existing procedures.

One commentor questioned why the public notice was circulated to EPA for Federal review instead of the permit application (§ 404(j)). The public notice usually contains all the pertinent information in the permit application (§ 233.32(d)). Under the Corps administered program, public and Federal review is normally based on the public notice; therefore, there will be no significant change from current practice. In addition, under either the Federal and State programs, EPA can request a copy of a particular application if it has a need for it.

In response to comment, we have reinstated the provision that if the Regional Administrator notified the Director within 30 days of receipt of the public notice that there is no comment, he may reserve the right to object within 90 days of receipt of the notice based on new information brought out by the public during the comment period or at a hearing.

Contrary to several comments received, the regulation already provides that the State shall provide a copy of every issued permit to the Regional Administrator (§ 233.50(a)(4)). These issued permits will be reviewed for compliance with the requirements for an approvable program, as part of EPA's overall oversight.

One commentor suggested that our provision for the Regional Administrator to consolidate comments for the Federal agencies conflicted with Section 404(h)(1)(H). However, Section 404(j) specifically assigns this coordination/consolidation role to EPA's Regional Administrator. This section clearly establishes EPA's Regional Administrator as the Federal focus for approved State programs. After "full consideration" of the comments of the Federal review agencies, EPA will prepare and transmit the Federal comment on a permit application to the State. If appropriate and/or useful, EPA may transmit copies of the other Federal agencies' comment to the State as part of the official Federal comment. Those agencies are, of course, also free to furnish information copies of their comments to the State at the same time they submit them to EPA.

*Section 233.51:* This section received many comments, which range from the view that Federal review has been waived far too much to one that Federal review has not been waived for enough categories of discharge. Other than the few categories never eligible for waiver, waivers will be developed on a State-by-State basis. Each State has unique resources that must be considered in developing categories or discharge eligible for waiver. These categories will be developed in consultation with the Federal review agencies and will be open to public comment. We anticipate that use of this waiver mechanism will reduce unnecessary paperwork and direct the Federal presence to where it is most needed and appropriate.

The proposed rule specified that general permits are not eligible for waiver of Federal review. The proposal intended that *draft* general permits are not eligible for waiver of review. This has been clarified in the final rule.

In response to comment, we have reinstated the provision that discharges into National and historical monuments

are not eligible for waiver of Federal review, in light of the special Federal interest in them.

We anticipate that existing Corps nationwide permits will be used as a basis for developing categories to discharge eligible for waiver of Federal review. Previous Federal agencies' comments (or no comment) can also be used in determining activities eligible for waiver of Federal review. Where EPA has used the advanced identification procedure with the Corps or the State under 40 CFR 230.80, or on its own initiative under Section 404(c) (40 CFR Part 231), the results of that process will be used to determine those areas and categories of discharge that should be, and/or those that should not be, considered for waiver of Federal review.

Categories of activities eligible for waiver of Federal review in a particular State will be developed after consultation with the Corps, FWS, and NMFS. These categories will be described in the State's submission for program approval and therefore will be subject to public comment. Activities for which Federal review is waived are also subject to annual review. If, at any time, any of these categories of activities are deemed inappropriate for continued waiver, they can (and will) be withdrawn from the waiver provision and become subject to individual review.

*Section 233.52:* In response to comments, we have added a requirement that the State's draft annual report to be made available for public inspection.

The annual report is a mandatory, not a discretionary, requirement for an approved program. In response to comment, we have added to the information that shall be included in the annual report the number of suspected unauthorized activities reported to the State and the nature of the State's action on these reported activities; added that the State shall report the number of violations identified as well as the number and nature of enforcement actions taken; and the number of permit applications received but not yet processed.

Contrary to comment on the annual reporting requirements, the regulation does require the Director to respond, in the final report, to the Regional Administrator's comments and questions about the draft report.

*Section 233.53:* One commentor suggested that program withdrawal should be initiated only where a State's program, on the whole, has repeatedly failed to comply with the requirements for an approvable program. This commentor suggested that continued problems with any one of the criteria specified in § 233.53(b) (2) and (3) is not sufficient grounds for program withdrawal. We cannot concur with this suggestion. While we do agree that program withdrawal will not be taken lightly and that program approval will not be withdrawn for minor reasons, continued non-performance of any of the criteria specified can be grounds for initiating program withdrawal. Each of the criteria listed is a vital part of an approved program and continued non-performance of any of these would result in a program that no longer fulfills the requirements for an approved program.

These regulations provide that the Administrator shall respond in writing to any petition to commence withdrawal proceedings. One commentor suggested that this exceeded the public involvement requirements. We believe that such written response is nonetheless good policy and publish the rule as proposed.

### Executive Order 12291

Since these rules are revisions which provide regulatory relief by, for the most part, increasing flexibility in State program design and administration, we have determined that they are not a major rule requiring a Regulatory Impact Analysis under Executive Order 12291. This rule has been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget in accordance with the requirements of Executive Order 12291.

### Regulatory Flexibility Act

This final rule was reviewed under the Regulatory Flexibility Act of 1980, Pub. L. 96-354, which requires preparation of a regulatory flexibility analysis for any rule which is likely to have significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. Since this revision to 40 CFR Part 233 will reduce paperwork, reporting requirements and application information requirements, this final rule will be beneficial to small entities. Thus, no Regulatory Flexibility Analysis is needed.

### Paperwork Reduction Act

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has approved the information collection requirements contained in this final rule under the provisions of the *Paperwork Reduction Act,* 44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.* and has assigned OMB control numbers:

2090-011.
2090-012.
2090-013.
2090-015.

### List of Subjects in 40 CFR Parts 232 and 233

Administrative practice and procedure, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Confidential business information, Water pollution control, Indian lands, Intergovernmental relations, Water supply, Waterways, Navigation, Penalties, Wetlands.

Dated: May 27, 1988.

**Lee M. Thomas,**

*Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency.*

For the reasons set out in the preamble, 40 CFR Part 232 is amended as set forth below.

1. Part 232 is added to read as follows:

## PART 232—404 PROGRAM DEFINITIONS; EXEMPT ACTIVITIES NOT REQUIRING 404 PERMITS

Sec.
232.1 Purpose and scope of this part.
232.2 Definitions.
232.3 Activities not requiring permits.

Authority: 33 U.S.C. 1344.

### § 232.1 Purpose and scope of this part.

Part 232 contains definitions applicable to the Section 404 program for discharges of dredged or fill material. These definitions apply to both the Federally operated program and State administered programs after program approval. This part also describes those activities which are exempted from regulation. Regulations prescribing the substantive environmental criteria for issuance of Section 404 permits appear at 40 CFR Part 230. Regulations establishing procedures to be followed by the EPA in denying or restricting a disposal site appear at 40 CFR Part 231. Regulations containing the procedures and policies used by the Corps in administering the 404 program appear at 33 CFR Parts 320-330. Regulations specifying the procedures EPA will follow, and the criteria EPA will apply in approving, monitoring, and withdrawing approval of Section 404 State programs appear at 40 CFR Part 233.

### § 232.2 Definitions.

(a) *Administrator* means the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency or an authorized representative.

(b) *Application* means a form for applying for a permit to discharge dredged or fill material into waters of the United States.

(c) *Approved program* means a State program which has been approved by the Regional Administrator under Part 233 of this chapter or which is deemed

approved under Section 404(h)(3), 33 U.S.C. 1344(h)(3).

(d) *Best management practices* (BMPs) means schedules of activities, prohibitions of practices, maintenance procedures, and other management practices to prevent or reduce the pollution of waters of the United States from discharges of dredged or fill material. BMPs include methods, measures, practices, or design and performance standards which facilitate compliance with the Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR Part 230), effluent limitations or prohibitions under Section 307(a), and applicable water quality standards.

(e) *Discharge of dredged material* means any addition of dredged material into waters of the United States. The term includes, without limitation, the addition of dredged material to a specified discharge site located in waters of the United States and the runoff or overflow from a contained land or water disposal site. Discharges of pollutants into waters of the United States resulting from the onshore subsequent processing of dredged material that is extracted for any commercial use (other than fill) are not included within this term and are subject to Section 402 of the Act even though the extraction and deposit of such material may require a permit from the Corps or the State Section 404 program. The term does not include *de minimus*, incidental soil movement occurring during normal dredging operations.

(f) *Discharge of fill material* means the addition of fill material into waters of the United States. The term generally includes, without limitation, the following activities: Placement of fill that is necessary to the construction of any structure; the building of any structure or impoundment requiring rock, sand, dirt, or other materials for its construction; site-development fills for recreational, industrial, commercial, residential, and other uses, causeways or road fills; dams and dikes; artificial islands; property protection and/or reclamation devices such as riprap, groins, seawalls, breakwaters, and revetments; beach nourishment; levees; fill for structures such as sewage treatment facilities, intake and outfall pipes associated with power plants and subaqueous utility lines; and artificial reefs.

(g) *Dredged material* means material that is excavated or dredged from waters of the United States.

(h) *Effluent* means dredged material or fill material, including return flow from confined sites.

(i) *Fill material* means any "pollutant" which replaces portions of the "waters of the United States" with dry land or which changes the bottom elevation of a water body for any purpose.

(j) *General permit* means a permit authorizing a category of discharges of dredged or fill material under the Act. General permits are permits for categories of discharge which are similar in nature, will cause only minimal adverse environmental effects when performed separately, and will have only minimal cumulative adverse effect on the environment.

(k) *Owner or operator* means the owner or operator of any activity subject to regulation under the 404 program.

(l) *Permit* means a written authorization issued by an approved State to implement the requirements of Part 233, or by the Corps under 33 CFR Parts 320–330. When used in these regulations, "permit" includes "general permit" as well as individual permit.

(m) *Person* means an individual, association, partnership, corporation, municipality, State or Federal agency, or an agent or employee thereof.

(n) *Regional Administrator* means the Regional Administrator of the appropriate Regional Office of the Environmental Protection Agency or the authorized representative of the Regional Administrator.

(o) *Secretary* means the Secretary of the Army acting through the Chief of Engineers.

(p) *State regulated waters* means those waters of the United States in which the Corps suspends the issuance of Section 404 permits upon approval of a State's Section 404 permit program by the Administrator under Section 404(h). The program cannot be transferred for those waters which are presently used, or are susceptible to use in their natural condition or by reasonable improvement as a means to transport interstate or foreign commerce shoreward to their ordinary high water mark, including all waters which are subject to the ebb and flow of the tide shoreward to the high tide line, including wetlands adjacent thereto. All other waters of the United States in a State with an approved program shall be under jurisdiction of the State program, and shall be identified in the program description as required by Part 233.

(q) *Waters of the United States* means:

(1) All waters which are currently used, were used in the past, or may be susceptible to us in interstate or foreign commerce, including all waters which are subject to the ebb and flow of the tide.

(2) All interstate waters including interstate wetlands.

(3) All other waters, such as intrastate lakes, rivers, streams (including intermittent streams), mudflats, sandflats, wetlands, sloughs, prairie potholes, wet meadows, playa lakes, or natural ponds, the use, degradation, or destruction of which would or could affect interstate or foreign commerce including any such waters:

(i) Which are or could be used by interstate or foreign travelers for recreational or other purposes; or

(ii) From which fish or shellfish are or could be taken and sold in interstate or foreign commerce; or

(iii) Which are used or could be used for industrial purposes by industries in interstate commerce.

(4) All impoundments of waters otherwise defined as waters of the United States under this definition;

(5) Tributaries of waters identified in paragraphs (g)(1)-(4) of this section;

(6) The territorial sea; and

(7) Wetlands adjacent to waters (other than waters that are themselves wetlands) identified in paragraphs (q)(1)–(6) of this section.

Waste treatment systems, including treatment ponds or lagoons designed to meet the requirements of the Act (other than cooling ponds as defined in 40 CFR 123.11(m) which also meet the criteria of this definition) are not waters of the United States.

(r) *Wetlands* means those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas.

**§ 232.3 Activities not requiring permits.**

Except as specified in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section, any discharge of dredged or fill material that may result from any of the activities described in paragraph (c) of this section is not prohibited by or otherwise subject to regulation under this Part.

(a) If any discharge of dredged or fill material resulting from the activities listed in paragraph (c) of this section contains any toxic polutant listed under Section 307 of the Act, such discharge shall be subject to any applicable toxic effluent standard or prohibition, and shall require a Section 404 permit.

(b) Any discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States incidental to any of the activities identified in paragraph (c) of this section

must have a permit if it is part of an activity whose purpose is to convert an area of the waters of the United States into a use to which it was not previously subject, where the flow or circulation of waters of the United States may be impaired or the reach of such waters reduced. Where the proposed discharge will result in significant discernable alterations to flow or circulation, the presumption is that flow or circulation may be impaired by such alteration.

[Note.—For example, a permit will be required for the conversion of a cypress swamp to some other use or the conversion of a wetland from silvicultural to agricultural use when there is a discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States in conjunction with constuction of dikes, drainage ditches or other works or structures used to effect such conversion. A conversion of Section 404 wetland to a non-wetland is a change in use of an area of waters of the U.S. A discharge which elevates the bottom of waters of the United States without converting it to dry land does not thereby reduce the reach of, but may alter the flow or circulation of, waters of the United States.]

(c) The following activities are exempt from Section 404 permit requirements, except as specified in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section:

(1)(i) Normal farming, silviculture and ranching activities such as plowing, seeding, cultivating, minor drainage, and harvesting for the production of food, fiber, and forest products, or upland soil and water conservation practices, as defined in paragraph (d) of this section.

(ii)(A) To fall under this exemption, the activities specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section must be part of an established (i.e., ongong) farming, silviculture, or ranching operation, and must be in accordance with definitions in paragraph (d) of this section. Activities on areas lying fallow as part of a conventional rotational cycle are part of an established operation.

(B) Activities which bring an area into farming, silviculture or ranching use are not part of an established operation. An operation ceases to be established when the area in which it was conducted has been converted to another use or has lain idle so long that modifications to the hydrological regime are necessary to resume operation. If an activity takes place outside the waters of the United States, or if it does not involve a discharge, it does not need a Section 404 permit whether or not it was part of an established farming, silviculture or ranching operation.

(2) Maintenance, including emergency reconstruction of recently damaged parts, of currently serviceable structures such as dikes, dams, levees, groins, riprap breakwaters, causeways, bridge abutments or approaches, and transportation structures. Maintenance does not include any modification that changes the character, scope, or size of the original fill design. Emergency reconstruction must occur within a reasonable period of time after damage occurs in order to qualify for this exemption.

(3) Construction or maintenance of farm or stock ponds or irrigation ditches or the maintenance (but not construction) of drainage ditches. Discharge associated with siphons, pumps, headgates, wingwalls, wiers, diversion structures, and such other facilities as are appurtenant and functionally related to irrigation ditches are included in this exemption.

(4) Construction of temporary sedimentation basins on a construction site which does not include placement of fill material into waters of the United States. The term "construction site" refers to any site involving the erection of buildings, roads, and other discrete structures and the installation of support facilities necessary for construction and utilization of such structures. The term also includes any other land areas which involve land-disturbing excavation activities, including quarrying or other mining activities, where an increase in the runoff of sediment is controlled through the use of temporary sedimentation basins.

(5) Any activity with respect to which a State has an approved program under Section 208(b)(4) of the Act which meets the requirements of Section 208(b)(4)(B) and (C).

(6) Construction or maintenance of farm roads, forest roads, or temporary roads for moving mining equipment, where such roads are constructed and maintained in accordance with best management practices (BMPs) to assure that flow and circulation patterns and chemical and biological characteristics of waters of the United States are not impaired, that the reach of the waters of the United States is not reduced, and that any adverse effect on the aquatic environment will be otherwise minimized. The BMPs which must be applied to satisfy this provision include the following baseline provisions:

(i) Permanent roads (for farming or forestry activities), temporary access roads (for mining, forestry, or farm purposes) and skid trails (for logging) in waters of the United States shall be held to the minimum feasible number, width, and total length consistent with the purpose of specific farming, silvicultural or mining operations, and local topographic and climatic conditions;

(ii) All roads, temporary or permanent, shall be located sufficiently far from streams or other water bodies (except for portions of such roads which must cross water bodies) to minimize discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States;

(iii) The road fill shall be bridged, culverted, or otherwise designed to prevent the restriction of expected flood flows;

(iv) The fill shall be properly stabilized and maintained to prevent erosion during and following construction;

(v) Discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States to construct a road fill shall be made in a manner that minimizes the encroachment of trucks, tractors, bulldozers, or other heavy equipment within the waters of the United States (including adjacent wetlands) that lie outside the lateral boundaries of the fill itself;

(vi) In designing, constructing, and maintaining roads, vegetative disturbance in the waters of the United States shall be kept to a minimum;

(vii) The design, construction and maintenance of the road crossing shall not disrupt the migration or other movement of those species of aquatic life inhabiting the water body;

(viii) Borrow material shall be taken from upland sources whenever feasible;

(ix) The discharge shall not take, or jeopardize the continued existence of, a threatened or endangered species as defined under the Endangered Species Act, or adversely modify or destroy the critical habitat of such species;

(x) Discharges into breeding and nesting areas for migratory waterfowl, spawning areas, and wetlands shall be avoided if practical alternatives exist;

(xi) The discharge shall not be located in the proximity of a public water supply intake;

(xii) The discharge shall not occur in areas of concentrated shellfish production;

(xiii) The discharge shall not occur in a component of the National Wild and Scenic River System;

(xiv) The discharge of material shall consist of suitable material free from toxic pollutants in toxic amounts; and

(xv) All temporary fills shall be removed in their entirety and the area restored to its original elevation.

(d) For purpose of paragraph (c)(1) of this section, cultivating, harvesting, minor drainage, plowing, and seeding are defined as follows:

(1) Cultivating means physical methods of soil treatment employed within established farming, ranching and silviculture lands on farm, ranch, or

forest crops to aid and improve their growth, quality, or yield.

(2) Harvesting means physical measures employed directly upon farm, forest, or ranch crops within established agricultural and silvicultural lands to bring about their removal from farm, forest, or ranch land, but does not include the construction of farm, forest, or ranch roads.

(3)(i) Minor drainage means:

(A) The discharge of dredged or fill material incidental to connecting upland drainage facilities to waters of the United States, adequate to effect the removal of excess soil moisture from upland croplands. Construction and maintenance of upland (dryland) facilities, such as ditching and tiling, incidental to the planting, cultivating, protecting, or harvesting of crops, involve no discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, and as such never require a Section 404 permit;

(B) The discharge of dredged or fill material for the purpose of installing ditching or other water control facilities incidental to planting, cultivating, protecting, or harvesting of rice, cranberries or other wetland crop species, where these activities and the discharge occur in waters of the United States which are in established use for such agricultural and silvicultural wetland crop production;

(C) The discharge of dredged or fill material for the purpose of manipulating the water levels of, or regulating the flow or distribution of water within, existing impoundments which have been constructed in accordance with applicable requirements of the Act, and which are in established use for the production or rice, cranberries, or other wetland crop species.

[Note.—The provisions of paragraphs (d)(3)(i) (B) and (C) of this section apply to areas that are in established use exclusively for wetland crop production as well as areas in established use for conventional wetland/non-wetland crop rotation (e.g., the rotations of rice and soybeans) where such rotation results in the cyclical or intermittent temporary dewatering of such areas.]

(D) The discharge of dredged or fill material incidental to the emergency removal of sandbars, gravel bars, or other similar blockages which are formed during flood flows or other events, where such blockages close or constrict previously existing drainageways and, if not promptly removed, would result in damage to or loss of existing crops or would impair or prevent the plowing, seeding, harvesting or cultivating of crops on land in established use for crop production. Such removal does not include enlarging or extending the dimensions of, or changing the bottom elevations of, the affected drainageway as it existed prior to the formation of the blockage. Removal must be accomplished within one year after such blockages are discovered in order to be eligible for exemption.

(ii) Minor drainage in waters of the United States is limited to drainage within areas that are part of an established farming or silviculture operation. It does not include drainage associated with the immediate or gradual conversion of a wetland to a non-wetland (e.g., wetland species to upland species not typically adequate to life in saturated soil conditions), or conversion from one wetland use to another (for example, silviculture to farming).

In addition, minor drainage does not include the construction of any canal, ditch, dike or other waterway or structure which drains or otherwise significantly modifies a stream, lake, swamp, bog or any other wetland or aquatic area constituting waters of the United States. Any discharge of dredged or fill material into the waters of the United States incidental to the construction of any such structure or waterway requires a permit.

(4) Plowing means all forms of primary tillage, including moldboard, chisel, or wide-blade plowing, discing, harrowing, and similar physical means used on farm, forest or ranch land for the breaking up, cutting, turning over, or stirring of soil to prepare it for the planting of crops. Plowing does not include the redistribution of soil, rock, sand, or other surficial materials in a manner which changes any area of the waters of the United States to dryland. For example, the redistribution of surface materials by blading, grading, or other means to fill in wetland areas is not plowing. Rock crushing activities which result in the loss of natural drainage characteristics, the reduction of water storage and recharge capabilities, or the overburden of natural water filtration capacities do not constitute plowing. Plowing, as described above, will never involve a discharge of dredged or fill material.

(5) Seeding means the sowing of seed and placement of seedlings to produce farm, ranch, or forest crops and includes the placement of soil beds for seeds or seedlings on established farm and forest lands.

(e) Federal projects which qualify under the criteria contained in Section 404(r) of the Act are exempt from Section 404 permit requirements, but may be subject to other State or Federal requirements.

2. Authority citation for Part 233 continues to read as follows:

**Authority:** 33 U.S.C. 1344.

3. Part 233 is amended by revising Subparts A, B, C, E, and F and by redesignating Subpart D as G and the section number is changed from "233.42" to "233.60" and by adding a new Subpart D to read as follows:

## PART 233-404 STATE PROGRAM REGULATIONS

### Subpart A—General



### Subpart B—Program Approval



### Subpart C—Permit Requirements



### Subpart D—Program Operation



### Subpart E—Compliance Evaluation and Enforcement



### Subpart F—Federal Oversight



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## Subpart A—General

### § 233.1 Purpose and scope.

(a) This Part specifies the procedures EPA will follow, and the criteria EPA